

13.5-15.5 (14.33) mm. 4♀♀: wing 48.0-51.0 (49.50), tail 28.5-31.0 (29.83), culmen 13.0-15.0 (14.50) mm.

Remarks. *Batis occultus* is the second species of *Batis* to have been defined in recent years, the other being *Batis ituriensis* Chapin, which was distinguished from *Batis minima* Verreaux by C. Erard in his paper 'Affinities de *Batis minima* (J. et E. Verreaux) et de *B. ituriensis* Chapin' (*Oiseau* 45 (3): 235-240, 1975).

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The nest and eggs of the Black-and-Rufous Swallow *Hirundo nigrorufa*

by P. St. J. Bowen and J. F. R. Colebrook-Robjent

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Benson (1956:603) was the first to describe the nest of *Hirundo nigrorufa*. It was "an open cup (adhering to the side of a pit)" at Kasama, Northern Province, Zambia and when found on 10 November contained 3 almost featherless chicks. Lippens & Wille (1976) record a nest from Zaire: "Le 19 juillet 1959, en saison sèche, nous avons trouvé un nid près de Gungu, au Kwilu; il contenait trois oeufs brun-tacheté . . .". The inadequacy of this description of a previously undescribed egg justifies this note. For a general account of the species see Bowen (1983).

P. St. J. B. found 22 nests of *H. nigrorufa* in the Mwinilunga District, North-Western Province, Zambia, between 1977 and 1980. The earliest laying date was 1 July, when a nest contained its first egg, completed clutches being found from early August through to mid-October. All the nests were attached, under a slight overhang, to almost bare vertical earth banks of perennial rivers or streams flowing through dambos (= open grassland along a drainage line) or along grassy valleys, and all were well hidden. The nests were constructed of mud (not as pellets) and rootlets, the lining consisting of a little grass with sometimes a few feathers. The external dimensions of one nest were 80 mm (width) and 55 mm (front lip to back). Internally, the cup measured 60 mm in diameter at its widest and 45 mm in depth. When known to be complete, clutches have been of 3 eggs.

The eggs are blunt to rather long oval and somewhat glossy. The ground varies from white to cream and, for a swallow, the eggs are rather well marked with (in different clutches) peppering, speckling or spotting of warm brown, dark brown or chocolate brown, over ashey-grey or lilac-grey. The markings tend to be concentrated around the blunt end, but the distribution is more liberal on some eggs than others. The average size of 18 eggs from Mwinilunga was 17.6 x 12.9 mm (max: 19.1 x 13.2 and 17.4 x 13.4; min: 16.5 x 12.5 and 17.4 x 12.3 mm). The average weight of 9 fresh eggs was 1.48 g. As predictable, the eggs of *H. nigrorufa* are closely similar to those of the Blue Swallow *H. atrocaerulea*, with which it forms a superspecies (Hall & Moreau 1970). Two eggs of *H. atrocaerulea* (survivors of a deserted C/3) collected by Mrs. Margaret Snell at Inyanga, Zimbabwe on

19 November 1979, measuring 17.7 x 13.2 and 17.7 x 13.0 mm, were somewhat glossy white, speckled and spotted medium-brown over ashey-grey, thus showing more white ground than did any of the 18 eggs of *H. nigrorufa*.

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Lanius excubitor "jebelmarrae"

by G. Nikolaus

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During 5 weeks of fieldwork in Sudan on and around Jebel Marra (20 June-28 July 1983) it was surprising not to meet with *Lanius excubitor jebelmarrae*, which was described by Lynes (1923:94) as an endemic subspecies from Jebel Marra (13°00'N, 24°25'E, 3024 m), Darfur, Sudan. Lynes found it common and resident in the Jebel Marra highlands and in March the birds were becoming sexually active. He collected 4 skins between November and 21 March (Lynes 1925:72) which differed from common "lowland Grey Shrikes" *L.e. leucopygos* in having a rather purer grey mantle and a rump grey like that of the mantle instead of white. Cave & Macdonald (1955) state that *jebelmarrae* is similar to *L.e. elegans* in having a grey rump, but is rather smaller.

Because of the absence of these birds during summer, the 4 skins in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) were compared with other *L. excubitor* material from Africa. They were identical with *L.e. aucheri* from East Africa in colouration and state of moult. This means that *L.e. jebelmarrae* is synonymous with *L.e. aucheri* and that the birds found by Lynes were a wintering population on Jebel Marra. *L.e. aucheri* is a common winter visitor to northeast Sudan, especially the Red Sea Hills, from late September to March. The Jebel Marra birds would be part of this wintering population, showing here a preference for higher altitudes than the lowland subspecies *L.e. leucopygos*.

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